



U.S. Department of Justice

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **UNITED STATES ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES THAT THREE CHARGED IN \$1.4 MILLION VIRGIN ISLANDS BRIBERY SCANDAL**

U.S. Attorney Anthony J. Jenkins and Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the U.S. Justice Department Criminal Division, announced today that former Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources ("DPNR") Division of Environmental Protection Director Hollis L. Griffin, former Virgin Islands Fire Service employee Earl E. Brewley, and Esmond J. Modeste, the purported Project Manager of a fictitious company by the name of Elite Technical Services ("Elite"), have been formally charged with engaging in an elaborate bribery and kickback scheme to defraud the U.S. Virgin Islands government of approximately \$1.4 million in federal and local funds. Griffin, Brewley, and Modeste face a maximum sentence of five years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, and \$1.4 million in forfeiture.

According to court documents, in early-2000, Griffin, Brewley, Modeste, and others formed Elite and then used the fictitious company, as well as other companies, to seek and be awarded at least seven government contracts valued at approximately \$1.4 million. Although little or no actual work was performed on the contracts – which were awarded by DPNR and the Virgin Islands Department of Property and Procurement ("DP&P") on behalf of DPNR and the Virgin Islands Fire Service – payments totaling over \$1.1 million were made to Elite and the other companies. Once the contract proceeds were paid to Elite and the other

companies, the Informations charge, Brewley, Modeste and others paid bribes and kickbacks totaling between \$300,000 and \$350,000 to at least four territorial government officials including Griffin.

The Criminal Informations filed against Griffin, Brewley, and Modeste charge the defendants with engaging in a five year conspiracy to commit Bribery Concerning Programs Receiving Federal Funds, Honest Services Mail Fraud, and Structuring Currency Transactions in violation of federal law. With respect to these charges, the court filings allege that many of the contracts in issue were funded with federal monies and that both the DPNR and the Fire Service otherwise receive annual appropriations of federal funds with which to fund such programs and contract awards. The charging documents further allege that certain documents and checks sent in furtherance of the illegal conspiracy were delivered by U.S. Mail and Federal Express. Finally, the charging documents identify a series of \$9,900 cash withdrawals (totaling over \$350,000) allegedly made by Brewley, Modeste, and others after depositing certain contract proceeds into FirstBank, Wachovia, and Banco Popular. The Government charges that these cash withdrawals were made in order to pay the bribes and kickbacks in cash while avoiding the filing of Currency Transaction Reports ("CTRs") by the local banks.

This case is being jointly prosecuted by Armando O. Bonilla of the U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Division, Public Integrity Section, headed by Acting Chief Andrew Lourie; and Executive Assistant United States Attorney Major R. Coleman of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of the Virgin Islands. The matter continues to be investigated by a task force comprised of: the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Treasury Department/Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Virgin Islands Office of the Inspector General and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of the Inspector General.